



Speech from
the Throne
to Open
the Second Session
of the Thirty-Sixth
Parliament of Canada
October 12, 1999

Summary

Building a Higher Quality of Life for All Canadians

Canada

The government welcomes the views of Canadians. To provide comments or to obtain more information on the government's strategy, please call, visit our Web site, e-mail or write:

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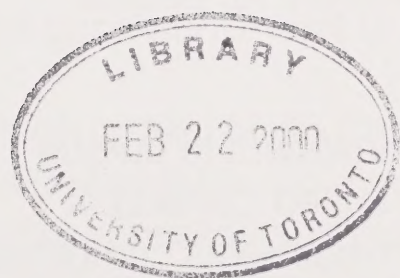


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Introduction

This booklet summarizes the Government Of Canada's comprehensive strategy to build a higher quality of life for all Canadians, as set out in the Speech from the Throne that opened the Second Session of the 36th Parliament of Canada on October 12, 1999.

In recent years, the government has established a solid foundation for building a stronger country and a higher quality of life for Canadians in the 21st century.

- The government has restored the nation's finances and modernized programs, paving the way for sustained economic growth and job creation and giving Canadians choices about how to build for the future.
- The government has made strategic investments in the top priorities of Canadians.
- Federal, provincial and territorial governments are finding new ways to work together to meet the economic and social needs of Canadians.
- Canada has advanced an international agenda that reflects our values, to enhance prosperity and security for people around the world.

This booklet sets out the government's commitment to pursue a comprehensive strategy for a strong and united Canada. It outlines a balanced approach of strategic investments combined with tax reduction and debt reduction.

Building a Higher Quality of Life for All Canadians

Today, Canadians stand before a new century confident in the promise of our country for our children and grandchildren.

The promise of Canada was born in an age when countries were forged through war or revolution. Our nation's founders chose a unique path, which has become the Canadian way – creating a country dedicated to peace, order and good government for all its citizens.

Canada began as a small colony with little industry and no role of its own in global affairs. Today, we can look with pride on our achievements as an independent and prosperous nation with a dynamic economy, strong and democratic society, and sense of community. A nation recognized around the world for the quality of life of its citizens. A nation whose voice is respected in the councils of the world.

The world is changing rapidly. Technology is altering every aspect of our lives. Knowledge and creativity are now the driving force in a new economy. Canadians will succeed in this changing world, just as we have succeeded throughout our country's history, because of our diverse talents, our values, and our commitment to working together.

A high quality of life for Canadians and a strong, united Canada are inseparable. To overcome the challenges in today's complex global economy and build a better future for Canadians, we must work together, pool our talents and share our ideas.

The government is committed to focussing on areas where it can and must make a difference in the lives of Canadians. It is committed to continue the Canadian way of working together, balancing individual and government action, and listening to citizens.

Achieving a higher quality of life requires a comprehensive strategy to accelerate the transition to the knowledge-based economy, promote our interests and project our values in the world. Together we will strive for excellence. This demands that we collaborate to:

- develop our children and youth – our leaders for the 21st century
- build a dynamic economy
- strengthen health and quality care for Canadians
- ensure the quality of our environment
- build stronger communities
- strengthen the relationship with Canada's Aboriginal peoples
- advance Canada's place in the world

Children

Giving children the best start in life is the best investment we can make in Canada's future. Parents and families have the primary responsibility for the care of their children, but they require the support of all of society. The government will continue to work with provinces, territories and other partners to provide this support.

The government will also help parents spend more time caring for young children and ensure they have the resources to meet their children's needs.

Already, the federal, provincial and territorial governments have jointly established the National Child Benefit. The federal contribution of an additional \$1.7 billion a year is making it easier for low-income families to break the cycle of poverty.

Our commitment to Canadians

- as part of the National Children's Agenda, work with provinces and territories to reach an agreement by December 2000 on further joint investments to support early childhood development
- make a third investment in the National Child Benefit and seek increased provincial and territorial investments in families
- reduce income taxes for families
- extend Employment Insurance parental leave benefits and promote a more family-friendly environment in federally regulated workplaces
- work with provinces and territories to reform family law and strengthen supports to families to ensure that, in instances of separation or divorce, the needs and best interests of children come first

Youth

Today's young people are acquiring knowledge and skills at an earlier age. They are at home in the wired world.

Young Canadians deserve more and earlier opportunities to get involved, develop their talents and expand their skills and, in doing so, become more active and engaged citizens.

To help Canada's youth realize their potential as leaders, the government will expand their opportunities to learn about their country and its citizens, to use their skills to help others and to use their creativity to contribute to Canada's culture.

Our commitment to Canadians

- draw on the expertise of young Canadians to create new Internet access sites for the public
- help 100,000 young Canadians each year learn about their country and fellow citizens through exchanges
- give young Canadians (age 13 and up) the opportunity to create their "first works" using traditional approaches and new technologies
- give tens of thousands of youth the opportunity to volunteer to help others improve literacy, to enhance the environment, or to work as interns overseas
- continue to provide young Canadians with career information and access to learning and work opportunities

Dynamic Economy

Strengthening the fundamentals

Canadians have built a strong and dynamic economy. It is the cornerstone of our quality of life – providing the means to build a more equitable society, a healthier population, and stronger communities.

In the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century, the advantage goes to those countries that innovate, have high levels of productivity, quickly adopt the latest technology, invest in skills for their citizens, and seek out new opportunities around the world.

The government has helped sustain economic growth and increase productivity by restoring the nation's finances, making strategic investments, and cutting taxes by \$16.5 billion over three years.

The government will continue to cut taxes, reduce the debt burden, promote trade and investment, and help Canadians increase skills and knowledge. And it will help put in place the infrastructure needed for the 21st century.

Our commitment to Canadians

- set out a multi-year plan in the 2000 Budget for broad-based tax reductions
- keep the debt-to-GDP ratio on a permanent downward track

- step up trade promotion in key sectors
- launch an Investment Team Canada strategy to promote investment in Canada
- make it easier for global companies to base their headquarters in Canada
- work to build a more transparent, rules-based global trading system
- work toward the Free Trade Area of the Americas

Skills and knowledge

To ensure Canada has a leading knowledge-based economy in the 21st century, the government will work with its partners to help Canadians increase their skills and knowledge.

Our commitment to Canadians

- build partnerships for a national action plan on skills and learning
- make it easier for Canadians to finance lifelong learning
- provide Canadians with a single window for Canada-wide information about labour markets, skills requirements and training opportunities
- better match skills development to the evolving economy, under the leadership of the Sectoral Councils
- focus on recruitment, retention and skills in the federal Public Service to provide Canadians with the highest quality service possible

Infrastructure for the 21st century

For Canada to generate jobs and growth, it must have a strong, knowledge-based economy that creates new ideas and puts them to work.

Our knowledge-based economy is one in which all sectors – including natural resources and agriculture – strive to use leading technologies and processes, and one where technology enables rural communities to compete globally.

It is essential to better connect Canadians to each other, to schools and libraries, to governments and to the marketplace – so they can build on each other's ideas and share information.

Our commitment to Canadians

Knowledge infrastructure

- establish the Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- support a program of 21st Century Chairs for Research Excellence
- foster greater international collaboration
- facilitate commercialization of research
- strengthen federal science capacity

Information infrastructure

- make Canada a centre of excellence for electronic commerce
- enhance SchoolNet
- put government and communities on-line

Cultural infrastructure

- establish a virtual museum of Canada and put national collections on-line
- increase support for cultural expression and use of new media

Physical infrastructure

- develop a five-year plan with the provinces and territories, by December 2000, for improving Canada's physical infrastructure

Health and Quality Care for Canadians

Good health and quality care are essential to the well-being of all Canadians. And advances in technology, research and information are opening tremendous new opportunities for improving the health of citizens.

The government recently reaffirmed its commitment to medicare by investing an additional \$11.5 billion to modernize the health system for the beginning of the 21st century.

The government is committed to continue improving the health system by working with its partners to ensure that the evolving needs of all Canadians are met.

Working with the provinces and territories, the government will support innovations in health care delivery. With the results of these innovations, we will be better able to make informed decisions on the next significant investments in health.

Our commitment to Canadians

- support the testing of innovations in integrated service delivery, including for home care and pharmacare
- provide better access to up-to-date health information for health professionals and citizens
- make strategic investments in health research and technology
- take further action on environmental health issues and modernize health protection for all Canadians
- improve Canada's food safety program

Quality of our Environment

A clean and healthy environment is important to our long-term economic and social well-being – it is central to our quality of life.

Our ability to adopt innovative environmental practices and technologies will increasingly be part of Canada's strength in the 21st century.

Canadians are already working in their communities to preserve the natural environment, but meeting this goal is also a global challenge.

The government will continue to build partnerships at home and abroad to focus on sustainable development and improve the quality of the environment in our communities.

Our commitment to Canadians

- work with partners to meet our country's international commitment to address climate change by reducing greenhouse gases
- set and enforce tough pollution standards
- protect species at risk and their critical natural habitat
- extend Canada's national parks system
- provide technical assistance to developing countries so they can adopt sustainable practices
- clean up contaminated sites on federal lands and support innovative clean-up technologies
- strengthen the government's capacity for environmental research and place greater emphasis on sustainable development in government decision making
- report regularly to Canadians on progress in addressing their environmental concerns

Building Stronger Communities

Working Together

Our history has been one of Canadians helping Canadians to seize opportunities and rise to challenges.

This commitment to working together – by Canadians, their governments and their communities – will ensure Canada's continued success in addressing the complex issues of the 21st century.

The Social Union Framework Agreement, reached earlier this year, is a commitment by governments to continue working together for Canadians.

Strong communities depend on the participation of all members. The government will strengthen its partnerships with communities and the voluntary organizations that serve and sustain them. In addition, it will work with all its partners to help communities meet the needs of their members.

Our commitment to Canadians

- work with provinces to implement the provisions of the Social Union Framework Agreement, including the elimination of barriers that unjustifiably impede the mobility of Canadians from one province to another
- develop a national accord with the voluntary sector to lay the foundation for stronger partnerships with voluntary organizations
- work with community partners to ensure persons with disabilities are fully included
- help new Canadians adapt to life in Canada
- work with partners to help communities address the root causes of homelessness

Promoting Safer Communities

Canadians are justifiably proud of having built communities where citizens feel safe. This is key to our quality of life and contributes to Canada's comparative advantage.

The government will work with Canadians to ensure that our communities remain safe. Its focus will be balanced, combining prevention and a community-centred approach with action to deal with serious crime.

The government will also focus its attention on new threats and on combatting criminal activity that is becoming increasingly global in scope.

Our commitment to Canadians

- expand community-based crime prevention and re-introduce legislation to reform the youth justice system
- combat drug trafficking while helping communities help those most affected
- launch a program of restorative justice to help victims overcome the trauma of crime
- strengthen the capacity of the RCMP to fight domestic and global crime – including organized crime
- modernize legislation to better ensure public security
- work with the United States to modernize our shared border

A Stronger Relationship with Canada's Aboriginal Peoples

The contribution of Aboriginal people has shaped our country's heritage and will continue to enrich Canada in the new century.

The Government of Canada will continue to build on the strong foundation of reconciliation and renewal created by **Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan**.

The government will foster good governance and strong accountability in First Nations communities to support economic partnerships and improve living conditions.

Land claim agreements are essential to create certainty for Aboriginal people and surrounding communities – providing the climate needed for partnerships, investments and economic opportunities.

Our commitment to Canadians

- focus on improving the living conditions of Aboriginal people and, increasingly, on strengthening their economic opportunities
- introduce legislation to implement the historic agreement with the Nisga'a
- continue to work with Aboriginal communities to address their health needs

Canada's Place in the World

Canada is an outward-looking country, with a trade-oriented economy and a population drawn from every corner of the globe.

We have a reputation internationally for making a difference – through our contribution to eliminating landmines, our work with NATO and the UN in Kosovo, our efforts to establish the International Criminal Court, and our work to renew the international financial system.

The government will work to address challenges to human security, including conflict, disease, environmental disasters, and political and economic upheaval.

Our commitment to Canadians

- give increased prominence to human security in Canada's foreign policy
- increase Canada's international development assistance to enable poorer countries to improve the quality of life of their citizens
- work to secure international agreements to protect the rights of children and eliminate their exploitation
- build a foreign policy for the North to promote co-operation, trade and security and to protect the environment
- work to reform multilateral institutions and support the diversity of cultural expression around the world
- ensure that the Canadian Forces have the capacity to support Canada's role in building a more secure world

- further develop the capacity of Canadians to help ensure peace and security in foreign lands

As we prepare to celebrate the turn of the millennium, we can look to our past with pride and to our future with confidence. Like previous generations, we will face new challenges. But guided by our values and our collective experience, we can ensure that Canada remains the best place in the world in which to live – the best place to raise children, to learn, to pursue opportunity, to share in rich, diverse and safe communities, and to admire the beauty of nature.

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